

# **MAYOR'S COMMITTEE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

## **May 19, 2008**

### **MINUTES – Meeting in Newton City Hall – Cafeteria**

**PRESENT:** Jane Brown, Rob Caruso, Lucie Chansky, Jini Fairley, Rosemary Larking, Barbara Lischinsky, Girard Plante, Heather Platt, Janna Zwerner (Co-chair)  
**REGRETS:** Doug Sweet (Co-Chair), Jeff Hutter, Jason Rosenberg  
**STAFF:** Beverly Droz, Amy Yuhasz  
**GUESTS:** Eric Sheff, Dr. Lee Strauss, Alderman Vicki Danberg

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**The meeting was called to order at 6:35 pm.** This meeting was chaired by Janna.

**A motion for the minutes of the 4/23/08 meeting was made and accepted** with a note to change “Avalon” to “Arborpoint” and add that Lucie & Barbara also attended.

#### **Committee vs. Commission:**

Given Jason’s absence, Bev read his memo to the Committee stating that he believes there is no difference as to the credibility, legal standing, and perception from state and federal agencies as to whether we are a Commission by ordinance or by statute. The ordinance-based Commission has the advantage of flexibility and creativity, especially as it pertains to membership. In his experience, he has never run into a situation where agencies have asked how one’s Commission was formed. In fact, his experience is that such agencies actually treat the MCPD as a Commission.

Janna added that if we are a Commission by statute we can access HP fines which would allow us to advocate for and pursue more access in the community. There was discussion of statute vs. ordinance.

- We currently don’t know how much money comes in for HP fines or where it goes
- Membership would be limited by a statute, whereas ordinance we can have larger membership
- Janna said the statute does not prohibit us from having our own Advisory Committee
- Members are to review the statute and the proposed ordinance so we can vote at the next MCPD meeting.

#### **HP Parking, 221 Washington Street:**

The MCPD welcomed Eric Sheff who presented on behalf of his father, Dr. Michael Sheff who is out of town. Bev had presented background information via email to MCPD before the meeting including Dr. Sheff’s letter describing the situation. There are currently 2 metered spaces in front of his office at 221 Washington Street in Newton Corner, to the right as you exit the MA pike. Commercial vehicles constantly park there, blocking access to the handicap vans that bring patients. Dr. Sheff has many such patients and is concerned about liability issues to the patients. They need to be unloaded in a safe spot with access to the building. He is requesting that 1 metered space be made into a HP space.

There was discussion and the Committee felt that anyone with a HP placard could then park in such a space, making it unusable to Dr. Sheff. The Committee thanked Mr. Sheff for attending.

### **Newton Highlands Depot Station**

Bev met with architect Donald Lang today and distributed the blueprint for the variance to the front door that they seek at the 18 Station Ave site in the Highlands. Bev had previously emailed information about this now private office. This is a historic building, and the new owner is making it accessible.

The Committee welcomed the owner, Dr. Strauss who presented and described the situation. If the architecture of the historic stone front entry door were altered, the cost would be prohibitive and it would alter the historic building. Instead, they propose a ramp up to the side door where people could fully access both offices as well as the front lobby area. In that area they are building fully accessible bathrooms. Members had various questions. Dr. Strauss said his lease to the tenant in the office space next to the side door would stipulate that people can walk through the hallway to the front lobby and his office. A lower level space exists adjacent to the Green Line railroad track and is mostly an unfinished crawl space. Exterior work will include constructing a sloped walkway to the side door, installation of an automatic door opener and compliant threshold.

The Committee expressed support for the plans and initiatives and thanked Dr. Strauss for his presentation.

### **Audible Pedestrian Signals**

The MCPD welcomed Alderman Vicki Danberg and told her MCPD has some money through the CDBG to fund APS but we desire for APS to be accessible. She has had conversations with Traffic Engineer Clint Schuckel and David Koses of Planning and Development.

There are 4 pedestrian activated crossing signals (at \$20K each) that can easily be hooked into existing poles. MCPD recommends other sounds aside from the chirp. MCPD recommends:

- CVS on Centre Street in Newton Centre
- Waban Village on Beacon Street
- Rosemary brought up Washington Street near Warren House (approx 1600 Washington St) and problems with crossing street as well as the signal being inaccessible to her
- Austin Street and Walnut Street in Newtonville

Alderman Danberg brought up parking meters in Waban. The City has \$39K for parking meters and revenues will be \$50K annually. She said funds from meters are allocated to traffic and street related funds. Other villages have parking meters and while residents in Waban are not in favor of the change, it is important to the City to have such revenues. Jini mentioned we have some CDBG funds for APS and Alderman Danberg added maybe we could use some of the parking meter revenues for it.

Danberg is on the newly created Snow Task Force and mentioned there are 600 linear miles of street, 60 linear miles are plowed by 6 machines. She noted there are also many less police. The Committee thanked Ald. Danberg for her time.

### **HP Parking:**

Bev had emailed the information but also reported on Mr. Lewis Atkins request for a residential HP space. He and his wife live at 20 Trowbridge Street in Newton Centre, off Centre St, around the corner from Sacred Heart Church and many businesses. It's a short street with a few single family homes, 2 family units and 1 apartment building. There are always cars parking in front of his home

making it difficult for them to turn into their driveway. He is age 75, uses a walker and has a HP placard/plate. He submitted his application to the Clerk's office in Nov. 2007 but it got lost. Bev has talked with him and looked up his property on the city map. He is indeed in need of this residential HP space. Lucie drove by and spotted an HP space for the house next to him. Bev will call Mr. Atkins for more information.

### **CDBG ACCESS PROJECTS REPORT for May by Amy**

This report was submitted to MCPD by email before this meeting for their review. Per usual it is copied here within the minutes. Comments are noted at the end of this report.

- **Accessible Pedestrian Signals** (Project CD0703C. Expended, \$25,015; Budget balance: \$19,813) – **Work will proceed in July.** The Committee has requested the installation of APS-10 audible pedestrian signals at the intersections of Walnut and Cabot, Beacon and Chestnut, and Adams and Watertown. The total estimated hardware costs for these three intersections is \$4,200—based on a cost of \$350 per pedestrian button. We have requested that the Department of Public Works pay the approximately \$1,200 for installation; however, they do not have the funds needed at this time. Centre St. and Centre Ave. is a fourth priority intersection. Our hope is to initiate separate and independent crossing signals for the two streets, straighten the crosswalk across Centre St., and place the vehicle stop line before the crosswalk. The intersection would be best served by Polara Navigator signals because of ambient sound control and beaconing capabilities. Washington St. and Commonwealth Ave. is a fifth priority intersection. National Development and Newton-Wellesley Hospital have agreed to contribute \$90,000 toward improvements at that intersection. The Board of Aldermen voted to seek design recommendations from a consultant. Because the Purchasing Department is requiring that the consultant contract be bid, nothing will be determined until early in 2008. We are hoping that the project will include accessible pedestrian signals, preferably Polara Navigator signals.
- **Wellington Park Access** (Project CD0303C. Expended, \$5,411; Budget balance, \$0) – **Anticipate bench installation in May.** This project is a joint project using CDBG funds and Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds. The CDBG portion of the project is complete, except for the installation of benches. *[See the following project.]* It consists of an asphalt walkway providing an accessible route from the park entrance on Kilburn Street, past the basketball and tennis courts, then to the park entrance on Princess Road. *The CPA portion of the work was delayed because of a disagreement among residents regarding the location and surface material of additional walkways in the park. We have been told that the matter has been settled and all walkways will be constructed with asphalt surfaces to enhance accessibility.* (Expected Date of Completion: Spring 2008)
- **Benches** (Project CD0403C. Expended, \$0; Budget balance, \$3,000) – **No change since last report; anticipate bench installation in May.** The current budget will be limited to installation of benches at Wellington Park when the construction of walkways in the park is completed. (Expected Date of Completion: Spring 2008)
- **Curb Cuts** (Project CD0803G. Expended, \$47,941; Budget Balance: \$134,887) – **Work on curb cuts is well underway. We need to provide them with a new list.** During the late summer and fall they completed 38 of the 62 curb cuts we had requested for installation. We've also recommended the removal of 10 poorly located and non-conforming curb cuts. Ironically, it was one week after construction ended when we finally received state approval to construct needed curb cuts at the intersection of Boylston St. and Hammond Pond Parkway. The approval process took a mere eight months. We are still expanding our list of curb cuts to be

done in the 2008 construction season. Mayor's Committee members are encouraged to report priority locations for needed curb cuts. (*Expected Date of Completion: None. On-going work.*)

- **Public Facilities and Parks Access** (Project CD0703A. Expended, \$27,975; Budget balance, \$40,075, of which \$28,882 has yet to be committed.)
  - **No change since last report.** The first project that was completed under this budget was the construction of two sets of stairs and railings in Burr Park. The second project under this budget is the construction of the accessible walkway from the Mason-Rice School parking lot to the planned accessible play area within the Newton Centre Playground. The project is being managed by the Dept. of Parks and Recreation and carried out by the Dept. of Public Works. *Work has been completed on the section of the walkway from the school parking lot to the brook.* The remaining portion of the walkway beyond the brook will be completed in 2008 following the installation of the new play area. There will be approximately \$28,882 remaining in this budget following the completion of the Newton Centre Playground walkway. *We can assign these remaining funds to a public facilities or parks project at any time.* There is a potential long-term request from the Dept. of Parks and Recreation for accessibility improvements at the Newton Highlands Playground and Upper Falls Playground. (*EDC: none*)
- **FY08 Uncommitted Funds** (Project CD0803A. Budget balance, \$61,470) – *This represents funds available for project(s) to be determined.* Because of the on-going need for accessible curb cuts, this budget is a logical source for applying to future curb cut construction, but other projects can be considered.
- **FY09 Funds** (Project CD0903A. \$123,485) – *This represents funds available for project(s) to be determined.*

**The following represents discussion on the above CDBG report:**

**Audible Pedestrian Signals:**

- The APS at Washington St. and Commonwealth Ave. has not been bid yet.
- Centre St. and Centre Ave. - they are negotiating conducting a study to make it safer.

**Curb Cuts:**

Amy needs a list of curb cuts to present so MCPD members are requested to send them to her.

- Amy received an email from Jason today with list of many areas at Hammond Pond which she will visit.
- Amy said she has already submitted the one at Warren House on Washington Street.
- Mason Rice Elementary School area is very difficult and should be looked at.
- The Pelham Street lot was mentioned.
- Signal near Sweet Tomatoes in West Newton Center.

**Public Facilities:**

Amy expects a report from Parks and Recreation Dept. on several park areas. She will invite them and the Newton Housing Authority to present before our Committee at the June meeting.

**New Staff:**

The new staff person taking over part of Lowell's job is Kathleen Cahill and she will attend MCPD meetings.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

**Warren House**

Rosemary goes from Warrant House to CVS in West Newton. The sidewalk is blocked by bushes and there aren't any curb cuts. She needs an accessible route.

**Decision for NH Depot Office**

The Committee will write a letter of support for the variance.

**Discussion for Dr. Sheff's request**

The options are to (1) leave it as is, (2) have a HP space but that won't guarantee he'll have access to it, or (3) make it a HP drop off space. There were questions about the small parking lot at his place of business. One of the lot spaces has to be a HP space. Members felt that the better alternative was to request it to be designated as a drop-off loading zone space. Lucie and/or Rob will visit the site and report back at the next meeting.

**Walgreen's in Newton Centre**

Rob met with the person who will be doing the striping and presented him with a diagram of how it should be done. First there should be a HP van space with an access aisle, and then 2 HP spaces with one more access aisle. Copies of Rob's diagram were handed out. Rob noted that people park there and then go to the restaurant next door. Walgreen's will put up "tow signs". The man agreed that the number of spaces Rob counted was correct. The Police used to ticket when the Walgreen's manager called them onto the private property. Walgreen's knows it may have to do this again.

**Discussion of Agenda items for June**

- Members will vote on which kind of Commission they would prefer.
- Barbara will present on the water/sewer issue.
- For the CDBG funding discussion, Amy will invite representatives from Parks & Recreation Dept. and the Newton Housing Authority to present their items.
- It was noted the Newton Wellesley Hospital and Arborpoint gave \$90K for the APS at Washington Street and Commonwealth Ave. Why hasn't Clint given it out to bid? Perhaps for July, we should invite Kristen Fin, the property manager of Arborpoint, to come, and also Ted Tye from National Development Corporation, who owns Arborpoint.

**There was a motion to adjourn at 8:35pm.**

**The next meeting will be Wednesday, June 16 at 6:30pm in the cafeteria.**